

*Conserving the Montana Experience*



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks  
**ANNUAL REPORT**  
2007



*Montana Fish,  
Wildlife & Parks*

## Montanans celebrated some notable wildlife successes in 2007:

In March, Yellowstone grizzly bears were removed from the federal list of threatened and endangered species and declared a recovered population by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Grizzly numbers and habitat needs in Montana remain under study.

Two years after the Rocky Mountain gray wolf met recovery goals in 2002, FWP took on management of wolves in the state. In January 2007, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service proposed delisting the wolf in Montana. A final decision is pending.

In July, in another federal delisting decision, the bald eagle was declared a recovered species. Surveys in Montana in 1980 identified only 30 nesting eagle pairs and 26 eaglets. By 2006 there were 352 known active nests that produced at least 504 eaglets.

Bull trout, another threatened species, has had populations strong enough for FWP to allow limited fishing in Lake Koocanusa, Hungry Horse Reservoir, and the South Fork of the Flathead above Hungry Horse Dam for the past several years.

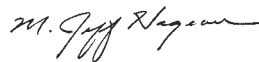
FWP is also working to conserve sage grouse, cutthroat trout and Arctic grayling, and studies are underway to as-

sess the needs of Montana's wolverines.

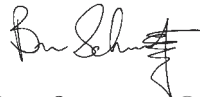
As we celebrate this important species-specific work, we are redoubling efforts to restore degraded habitat and waters and conserve open spaces to sustain wildlife communities in the years ahead.

During the past legislative session, the Montana Legislature allocated \$10 million in state general fund money for additional State Parks and Fishing Access Sites. Also, \$1 million in funds was allocated to match federal and private contributions to carry out Montana's Comprehensive Fish and Wildlife Strategy, the state's action plan to keep key fish and wildlife species from becoming endangered. We are now putting these new resources to work.

To follow these and other FWP activities year round, and to learn more about our strategy for the future, please add [www.fwp.mt.gov](http://www.fwp.mt.gov) to your list of web site favorites.



M. JEFF HAGENER, FWP Director



BRIAN SCHWEITZER, Governor



In March, Yellowstone grizzly bears were removed from the federal list of threatened and endangered species and declared a recovered population by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Grizzly numbers and habitat needs in Montana remain under study.



# Wildlife and hunting

Montana's 2007 "Elk Summit," held in Bozeman, reviewed the state of elk in Montana and the state's elk management plan. Montana now holds an estimated 130,000 to 160,000 elk, and most of the state's 44 elk management units exceed the state's objectives for elk numbers. FWP seeks to increase public awareness of elk-related issues and to engage the public in future decision-making.

After the 2007 general big game hunting season closed on Nov. 25, hunting remained open in many areas for an additional two weeks to reduce elk populations. Once again, a lack of snow and cold weather—and declining public access—played a significant role in keeping the harvest below the state's elk-management objectives.

Montana's five-dollar-a-chance SuperTag hunting license lottery grossed

\$640,660 in the past two years to help fund public hunting access enhancement and boost FWP's enforcement efforts. The lottery added chances on three new hunts—bison, lion and antelope.

Five Montana big game hunting opportunities auctioned annually by conservation groups brought in more than \$188,000 for species management. Hunts auctioned included bighorn sheep, moose, mule deer, elk and mountain goat.

Montana's third bison season opened on Nov. 15. Thirty-eight hunters were drawn from among 4,402 applicants for a license to hunt bison. Sixteen licenses could be allotted to Montana's eight Indian Tribes by law.

Three tribes agreed to participate. In addition, the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes and the Nez Perce are expected to harvest a similar number of buffalo under their treaty rights.

The Upland Game Bird Habitat Enhancement Program expanded to 400,000 acres. The program cost-shares with private landowners who maintain productive game bird habitat and provide hunting access.

The child of FWP's Automated Licensing System, Automated Licensing neXt generation, or ALX, was deployed statewide for simpler, faster transactions for license buyers. As a result, about \$160,000 in annual savings can be redirected to core fish and wildlife programs.

## *Are there too many elk in Montana?*

An FWP survey of elk hunters, elk outfitters, and private landowners found:

- 12** percent of elk hunters,
- 18** percent of elk outfitters, and
- 43** percent of landowners agreed or strongly agreed that there are too many elk.







For the first time since peregrine falcons were removed from the Endangered Species list in 1999, the Montana population has expanded to a point where the capture of some birds for the sport of falconry is being considered.



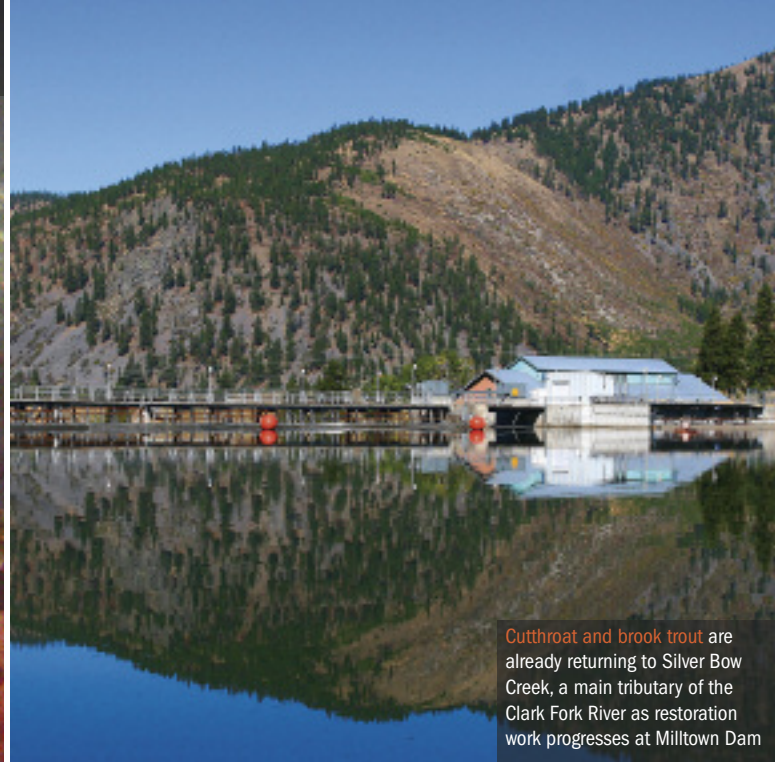
For every dollar spent by the FWP Wildlife Program, more than \$14 is spent by hunters and on wildlife-related recreation, benefiting local communities and the state's economy.

Montana hunters, resident and nonresident combined, spend about \$256 million annually on transportation, lodging, food, guide fees, and other purchases, excluding license fees.





**Bull trout** populations face increasing pressure from invasions of non-native lake trout.



**Cutthroat and brook trout** are already returning to Silver Bow Creek, a main tributary of the Clark Fork River as restoration work progresses at Milltown Dam



**For every dollar** spent by FWP's Fisheries Program, more than \$11 is spent by anglers and on fish-related recreation, benefiting local communities and the state's economies.

# Aquatic life and fishing

Rainbow trout estimates on the Smith and Missouri rivers indicated healthy fish populations, despite near-record low flows. Near Craig, the estimated 3,511 rainbow trout per mile is 120 percent of the 26-year average, and rainbow trout numbers upstream of Cascade were also above average. This is especially good news considering that whirling disease is found in the Missouri and several of its important spawning tributaries. Trout in some sections of the Smith River were about 70 percent of average, which is good considering the low summer flows on this river.

Future Fisheries Enhancement Program funding, matched by nearly \$23 million from private sources, has helped fund more than 400 projects in the past 12 years to benefit coldwater and warmwater fish species on the Blackfoot, Big Hole, Jefferson, Shields and other rivers, streams, lakes, and reservoirs. Projects include riparian fencing, restoration of stream and river channels, fish screens, and fish passage.

A recently completed structure on the Tongue River in Custer County solves a decades-old problem for spawning fish. The new fish passage, built at the

T&Y Diversion Dam, allows spawning runs of fish to pass from the Yellowstone and up the Tongue River to spawn, benefiting roughly some 49 different species of fish including: sauger, paddlefish, blue sucker, sicklefin chub, sturgeon chub and potentially pallid sturgeon. The Future Fisheries program provided partial funding and technical and biological expertise.

The Milltown Reservoir cleanup and dam removal project began more than a year ago and is on schedule for dam removal in spring of 2008. FWP has leadership responsibilities for the state restoration plan, is a member of the design review teams for remediation and restoration, and is responsible for monitoring fisheries during the project.

A FWP advisory committee was appointed to consider funding options for the \$22 million Fort Peck Hatchery for 2011 and beyond.

A new, full-color guide to Montana's 316 Fishing Access Sites was a hit with anglers and boaters. The guide is a handy companion to the FWP fishing regulations. FWP's web site also features an online FAS guide on the Fishing page.

## *Putting trout on notice*

Recent studies show Montana rivers with the heaviest fishing pressure are the Madison, Missouri, Bitterroot, Clark Fork, Bighorn, Yellowstone and Gallatin rivers.



Sauger

# Recreation and Montana's state parks, trails and shooting ranges

A new conservation easement on the Smith River includes 240 acres of recreation land and about one mile of riverfront. The land, recently donated to the State of Montana by Washington Companies, owned by Dennis Washington, is located at the mouth of Deep Creek, between the existing Parker Flat and Paradise Bend boat camps.

Twenty-one shooting ranges from around the state have qualified to receive Public Shooting Range Development Grant Program funds for range improvements during the 2007-2009 grant period.

First Peoples Buffalo Jump State Park is the new name for Ulm Pishkun State Park near Great Falls. The name honors the many different native people over the centuries who have ties to the site. This state park also gained 418 acres through a permanent conservation easement on adjacent state land.

Rosebud Battlefield State Park, the site of the 1876 Battle of Rosebud Creek between U.S. Army troops and Native American warriors, will soon have a long-range management plan as a result of a year-long public planning process. The pivotal Battle at Rosebud Creek preceded General Custer's historic loss at the Battle of the Little Bighorn eight days later. This 3,052-

acre park was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1972.

Lone Pine State Park is ready to meet the growing needs of the Kalispell community and surrounding area and the state with a recent 40-acre addition, a newly remodeled interpretive center and a completed forest-health project. Park visitors have increased every year for the past decade.



**REAL MONTANA. REAL CLOSE.**

The Parks Division unveiled a new logo featuring the tagline "Real Montana. Real Close." With a fresh identity, the agency hopes to distinguish the services offered by Montana State Parks.

Medicine Rocks State Park near Ekalaka celebrated its 50th Anniversary. In the late 1880s, Theodore Roosevelt camped at Medicine Rocks and commented, "All together it was as fantastically beautiful a place as I have ever seen."

For the first time, a comprehensive set of rules applies to commercial use at FWP sites. The more than \$130,000 generated by commercial use at fishing access sites will go to river recreation management and the fishing access site program.

Montana State Parks volunteers provided the equivalent of 14 full-time employees, saving the Parks Division \$480,096.

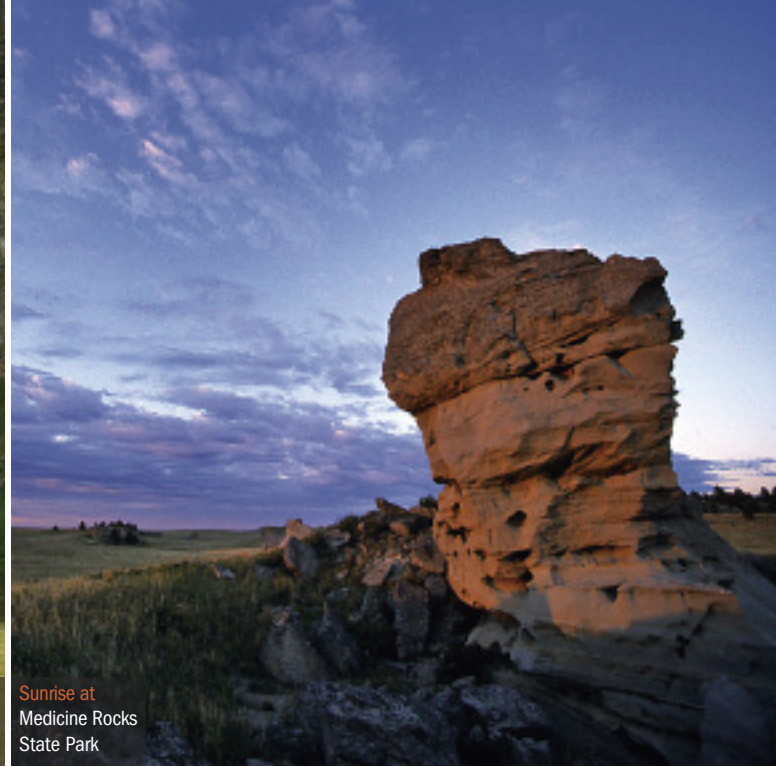
To assess public satisfaction, FWP's Responsive Management unit surveyed users of nine Montana State Parks that offer water recreation. The results will help FWP fine tune maintenance, determine facility improvements and improve visitor service. This completes a two-year effort to survey 14 parks across the state.

Nearly \$165,000 was raised through the sale of 11,348 nonresident snowmobile temporary permits. The funding helps maintain Montana's 4,000 miles of groomed snowmobile trails and related services.





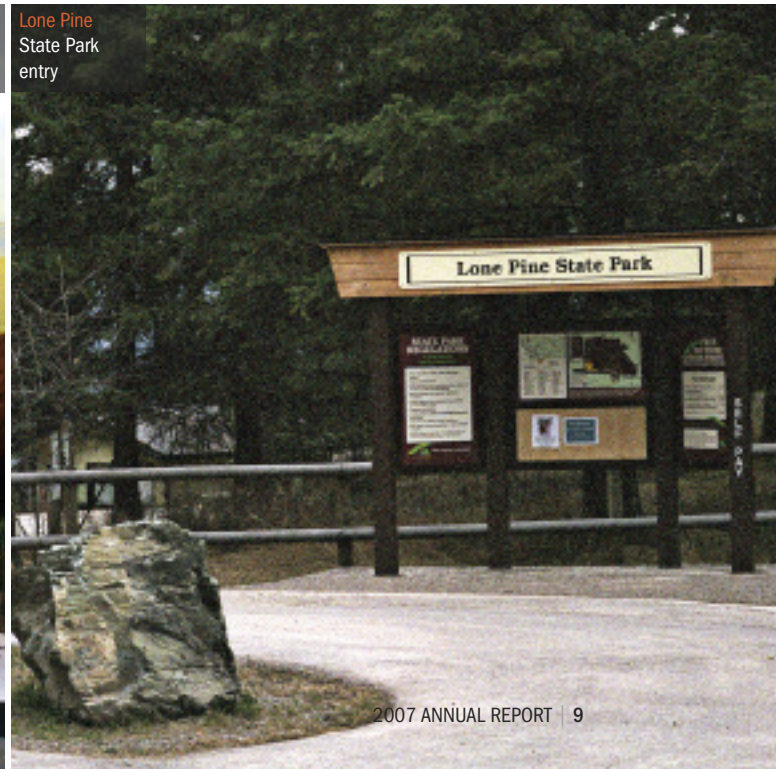
An Angler casts his line along the Smith River



Sunrise at Medicine Rocks State Park



First Peoples Buffalo Jump State Park



Lone Pine State Park entry





**Wildlife Management Areas:** The Milk River WMA and Rookery Fishing Access Site near Malta feature upland and migratory game bird habitat and hunting opportunities on over 1300 acres. This WMA is also home to beaver, yellow perch, mink, mule and whitetail deer, sauger, golden eagles, channel catfish, blue heron, brook trout, northern leopard frogs, black terns, turkeys, black-necked stilts, and other species.



# Protecting species' health and habitat

Each year, the Habitat Montana Program generates more than \$3 million for land easements, leases and acquisitions; the program has conserved more than 270,000 acres to date.

Other initiatives are also enhancing the amount and quality of wildlife habitat in Montana. The Montana Comprehensive Fish and Wildlife Conservation Strategy is helping FWP to focus on emerging conservation opportunities on the Milk and Big Hole rivers. Also, the 2007 Legislature allocated \$10 million for new fishing ac-

cess sites and state park lands that offer diverse recreational opportunities.

Exotic species in Montana are classified as controlled, noncontrolled or prohibited. FWP added a variety of new species to the prohibited and noncontrolled lists for 2007. For the latest information on the management and classification of exotic species, visit the Wild Things page at [fwp.mt.gov](http://fwp.mt.gov). Click on "Exotic Species."

CWD has yet to be detected in Montana's free-ranging deer, elk or moose during annual testing.

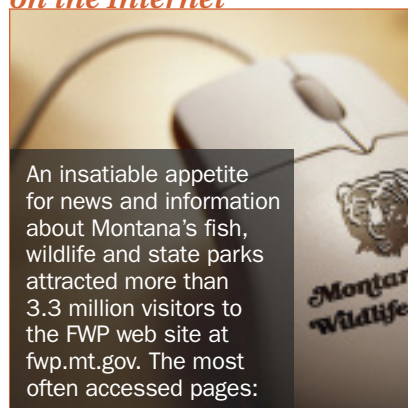
Deer and antelope along the Musselshell River between Melstone and Roundup experienced an outbreak of bluetongue virus. Deer and antelope in some areas along the Musselshell River were also affected by epizootic hemorrhagic disease, or EHD, which, like bluetongue, is transmitted by biting gnats. Cold weather generally brings the outbreaks to a halt.

An invasive water weed, Eurasian watermilfoil, was recently found in two northwestern Montana lakes.

The best defense against most aquatic invasive species is to inspect and then totally clean boats, trailers and other water-recreation gear after each use. To help demonstrate how it needs to be done, FWP acquired

equipment used by U.S. Forest Service fire fighters and adapted it for use as a boat washer.

## *Montana FWP on the Internet*



An insatiable appetite for news and information about Montana's fish, wildlife and state parks attracted more than 3.3 million visitors to the FWP web site at [fwp.mt.gov](http://fwp.mt.gov). The most often accessed pages:

1. Searches for information on public lands including Wildlife Management Areas, Fishing Access Sites and Montana State Parks
2. News
3. Hunt Planner Features
4. FWP's Automated Licensing Services
5. License and Permit Related Information (e.g. applications, deadlines, providers, SuperTag, and Bonus Points information)
6. Montana's Fishing Guide
7. Bear Identification



Eurasian watermilfoil can form large, floating mats of vegetation on the surface of lakes and rivers, preventing light penetration for native aquatic plants and impeding water traffic.

# Connecting Montanans to the outdoors

FWP kept Montanans continuously informed during a summer of intense drought and fire. Many streams and rivers had fishing restrictions and closures, and fires brought the temporary closure of a number of FWP-managed sites—including the 32,300-acre Beartooth Wildlife Management Area, which closed during the Meriwether fire near Helena.

Montana's Comprehensive Fish and Wildlife Conservation Strategy has a new home on the FWP website for easy public access. Click on "Conservation in Action." The new web pages contain conservation-planning tools, maps and other resources to help conservation organizations, watershed groups, cities, and counties work together for maxi-

mum benefit and the best use of Montana's conservation dollars.

FWP's Aquatic Education Program reached more than 40,000 Montanans across the state.

A new tool for teachers and parents seeking to connect youngsters to the natural world is the FWP "Discover Montana Ecosystems" web site. The site meets Montana's science curriculum standards and is recommended by the Governor and First Lady's Math & Science Initiative.

Updated technology makes FWP's new Internet bear identification-training tool an engaging way to learn through the simulation of a real bear hunt. This video game-style training tests a hunter's identifications skills,

judgment and timing. Bear identification training must be successfully completed before a hunter may obtain a black bear hunting license.

*Montana Outdoors* magazine was again recognized as one of the country's top two state conservation magazines by the Association of Conservation Information.

FWP's Responsive Management unit helps FWP stay in touch with the people it serves. About 10,000 hunters, anglers, park users, and others were surveyed in the past year to help guide the management of FWP programs.

FWP's Becoming An Outdoor Woman classes have helped 1,500 women in the past 14 years learn new ways to enjoy the outdoors.





# Law Enforcement

Each year, FWP wardens have personal contact with more than 150,000 hunters, anglers and other outdoorsmen and -women and more than 9,000 landowners.

In a typical year, Montana game wardens write more than 4,500 citations and complaints, issue more than 1,500 courtesy citations and give nearly 7,000 verbal warnings.

On average, fines totaling more than \$500,000 are assessed for violations annually.

## *Law Enforcement by the Numbers*



FWP regional investigators have been very successful in assisting field wardens on investigations of large poaching operations

**74** FWP has 74 field wardens

**13** FWP hired 13 new wardens to replace retiring wardens in 2007

**31,000** FWP wardens checked 31,000 boats, snowmobiles and off-highway vehicles

**350** FWP Wardens gave 350 public presentations



# Revenue Sources

## Hunting And Fishing Licenses

This revenue source includes all license sales, interest earnings and miscellaneous revenues. Nonresident sales account for approximately two-thirds of license revenue.

## Federal Revenue

More than \$7 million comes from an excise tax on sporting arms and ammunition, handguns and certain archery equipment (Pittman-Robertson). An additional \$8.2 million in federal funding comes from an excise tax on fishing equipment and electric trolling motors, a federal fuel tax, and import duties on fishing tackle and pleasure boats (Wallop-Breaux). Montana received about \$1 million from the federal State Wildlife Grant program to help fund research

and management programs for species that have special conservation needs. The Land and Water Conservation Fund provided additional federal funding for State and local parks.

## Other State Revenue

Other state revenue sources include: a portion of the state's lodging facilities use tax, a small percentage of the state fuel tax, a portion of light vehicle registration fees, nonresident state parks fees, and interest earnings from coal severance tax receipts.

## State General Fund

For the first time since 2001, FWP has received state general fund assistance for the fisheries and wildlife programs to match federal State Wildlife Grants.

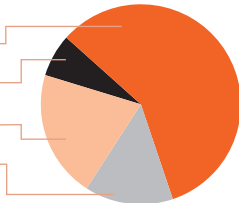
# Special Funding

- License sales: license revenues provide about 58 percent of FWP's total operating budget
- In fiscal year 2007, nonresident license sales accounted for about two-thirds of total license revenues.
- Federal funds account for over 20 percent of the overall budget for use in fisheries and wildlife restoration efforts and for parks development and maintenance, boating safety, education and regulation.
- The State Wildlife Grant (SWG) program helps states integrate monitoring and management of all fish and wildlife species, and to implement FWP's Comprehensive Fish & Wildlife Conservation Strategy. FWP received \$1.07 million in funding

## 2008 PROJECTED BUDGET

This illustration shows how FWP is funded. Actual annual revenues may fall above or below the figures used here:

Hunting and Fishing Licenses.....	\$50,128,495	58.2%
General Fund.....	\$5,940,000	6.9%
Federal Funds.....	\$17,742,730	20.6%
Other State Revenue.....	\$12,371,192	14.3%
<b>TOTAL FUNDS:</b> .....	<b>\$86,182,417</b>	<b>100%</b>





# Planned Expenditures

from this federal program in 2007.

- Habitat Montana includes several programs that benefit wildlife habitat as listed below:

House Bill 526: designates a portion of hunting license money for land acquisition .....\$3,000,000

Upland Game Bird Habitat Enhancement Program .....\$600,000

Migratory Bird Habitat Enhancement .....\$248,000

One Bighorn Sheep License Auction\* .....\$126,000

One Moose License Auction\* .....\$18,000

One Mountain Goat License Auction\* .....\$8,100

One Elk License Auction\* .....\$24,300

One Mule Deer Auction\* .....\$12,150

\*amount after 10 percent went to the auctioning organization

## FWP SPENDS ITS MONEY TWO WAYS:

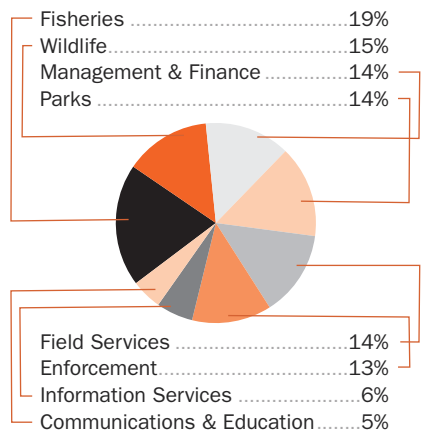
**Operations:** Day-to-day management of Montana's fish, wildlife and parks resources. The pie chart below illustrates FWP's operating expenditures.

► In 2007, FWP made more than \$500,000 in payments-in-lieu-of-taxes to counties for fishing access sites, wildlife management areas and state parks.

**Capital:** Major repair and maintenance of FWP properties, renovation and construction of facilities, and protection, enhancement and acquisition of critical habitats.

Operations .....	\$68,886,417
Capital .....	\$17,296,000
<b>Total .....</b>	<b>\$86,182,417</b>

## HOW OPERATING EXPENDITURES ARE USED:



## READ MORE ABOUT MONTANA FWP

*Montana Outdoors* is Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks' full-color magazine featuring the latest information on conservation issues, new management programs, and fishing, hunting, and parks recreation. A one-year subscription (six issues) is \$9. Call toll-free (800) 678-6888, or subscribe on-line at: [www.fwp.mt.gov/mtoutdoors](http://www.fwp.mt.gov/mtoutdoors)

## MONTANA FWP ON THE WEB:

[www.fwp.mt.gov](http://www.fwp.mt.gov)





## FWP MISSION

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, through its employees and citizen commission, provides for the stewardship of the fish, wildlife, parks and recreational resources of Montana, while contributing to the quality of life for present and future generations.

**Governor of the State of Montana**  
Brian Schweitzer

**FWP Director**  
M. Jeff Hagener

**FWP Commission**  
Steve Doherty, Chairman  
*Great Falls*

Dan Vermillion  
*Livingston*

Shane Colton  
*Billings*

Vic Workman  
*Whitefish*

Willie Doll  
*Malta*

**For more information, visit: [fwp.mt.gov](http://fwp.mt.gov)**

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